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ABSTRACT

The paper illustrates time-series variation in educational expectations of high school seniors. Two contentions pertaining to educational expectations have been that (1) the expectations of youth as a whole are rising, and (2) the traditional variance between rural and urban youth are depreciating. Based on data obtained from North Carolina high school seniors in 1963 and 1970, these contentions were investigated together with a number of indicator variable relationships. The sample consisted of about 1,200 students in 1963 and approximately 3,100 in 1970. The latter had a larger urban component and included a limited number of non-public school students. Data were presented on the assumption that observed differences in expectation between the 1963 and 1970 students result from the influence of time and its associated variables. Some findings were: (1) 28 percent of the 1963 students indicated high educational expectations compared to 35 percent in 1970; (2) expectation was high in 1970 in all but one of the 14 comparisons; (3) expectation among black students in 1963 exceeded that of 1970; and (4) the ratio of difference in proportions of urban and rural residents with high educational expectations decreased slightly in 1970 although the gross expectation of urban residents remained substantially greater than that of rural respondents. Data gathered from about 1,000 high school seniors in North Dakota in spring 1973 are presented in the tables, but due to geographic and social variances are not used in time-sequence analysis of the North Carolina data. (NQ)

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SOME LONGITUDINAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE EDUCATION EXPECTATION OF RURAL YOUTH*

by

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SOME LONGITUDINAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE EDUCATION EXPECTATION OF RURAL YOUTH

It has been asserted that one of the more compelling deficiencies of research into the educational expectations of youth has been the failure to obtain historical trend data. Simultaneously, it has been contended that the expectations of youth are rising; and more specifically, that the traditional variances in expectation between rural and urban youth are depreciating (Kuvlesky). This paper investigates those contentions, together with a number of indicator variable relationships, based on data obtained from North Carolina high school seniors in 1963 and in 1970, and attempts to provide explanation of observed differences in expectation.

The 1963 sample consisted of about 1200 students. The 1970 data were obtained from approximately 3100 respondents. The newer sample had a larger urban component. It also differed from the earlier sample by inclusion of a limited number of students from non-public schools.

Data also were gathered from a sample of about 1000 high school seniors in North Dakota, in the Spring of 1973, and are presented in the tables as a matter of general interest. Due to geographic and social variances, these data are not used in time-sequence analysis of the North Carolina materials.

A basic assumption of the study demands elaboration at this point. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate time-series variation in educational expectation of high school seniors. To accomplish this objective with confidence would require either a panel sample or a matched sample. Use of a panel would be self-defeating as the 1963 seniors at any subsequent date would no longer be high school seniors. A matched sample exceeded the resource potential of the study. The data are presented on the assumption that observed differences in expectation between the 1963 and 1970 samples are resultants of the influence of time and its associated variables. The assumption seems tenable, although it is recognized that the differences could be consequences of variances between the samples, and is not otherwise defended.

I am dealing here with the expectation rather than the aspiration of the respondents (Kuvlesky and Bealer). The analysis concerns those who had high expectation versus those who did not. The ability to name the college in which fall enrollment was planned constituted the differential. The contingency tables show a variant n due to non-response in various categories.

Findings and Discussion

Clearly, the data support the contention of a rise in expectation on the part of youths. Twenty-eight percent of the 1963 sample indicated high educational expectation as opposed to 35 percent of the 1970 sample. In all but one of the 14 comparisons in the accompanying tables, expectation was higher in 1970, although the increase was not always great. Distressingly, the one comparison in which 1963 expectation exceeded that of 1970 was among black students, perhaps indicating a generalized collapse of the enthusiasms and excitements generating great expectational levels among blacks in the mid-sixties. Interpretation of this discordant finding must accommodate the fact that high expectation as used here is limited to attendance at four year colleges. It is possible that the rapidly expanding system of junior and technical colleges in North Carolina may have disproportionate appeal to these students, and that their total educational expectation increased, 1963 to 1970. Nonetheless, it is not without significance that projected enrollment at four year institutions depreciated for this sub-set of the samples.

While still commenting generally upon the increase in expectation, it is worth noting differences in proportions of the categorical comparisons, 1963-1970. Of the 14 categories used in analysis, as many as one-third of the 1963 sample indicated high educational expectation in only four instances (28.5%), while the comparable figure for 1970 was eight (57.1%). Not only was there a definite increase in expectation level for the 1970 sample -- the proportion of students in each category of that sample which had high education typically was quite large. Decreasing college enrollment figures of the past year or two would lead to the conclusion that many of these expectations are not being met, leading to questions regarding the directions the resulting tensions might take.

It has been a truism that male educational expectation exceeds that of females, a truism challenged by our 1963 data but supported in 1970, Table 1. The proportion of respondents with high education expectation had increased for males and females, but considerably more for the former. The differences between the two sample were significant at the .001 level.

While findings have sometimes been equivocal (Middleton and Grigg), student expectation level has been considered to vary with residence (Boyle, Sewell, and Armer). More specifically, rural-urban residence variations have been associated with differences in level of expectation (Burchinal), with increasing urbanity exerting an elevating influence. The impetus for comparison of rural and urban residents essentially is an outgrowth of Lipset's paper containing a set of hypotheses, frequently misinterpreted as a theory, in which he posited a depressing effect upon expectation of rural residents consequent upon limited exposure to variant role models and situational precedents. As Kuvlesky has recalled, control on factors such as intelligence and SES tends to obviate rural-urban expectation differences.

The variance in expectation associated with residence is obvious for both our 1963 and 1970 samples (Table 2). Although village resident expectation tended to be almost identical with that of town residents, inter-category differences within each sample exceeded the .001 level of significance. In all comparisons, expectation from the 1970 sample exceeded that of the 1963 sample. The rate of increase was greater for open country than for town respondents, which may indicate that in the long run the variation in increase, if not the gross proportions with high educational expectation, will equalize. Inter-sample expectation difference significance exceeded the .001 level.

It has been assumed, and basically supported, that the expectation level of blacks is less than that of whites, although Gist and Bennett cast some doubt on this contention. Our 1963 data indicated the reverse, with blacks projecting greater expectation than whites (Table 3). (Extremely high expectation by black females accounted for this fact, overcoming lagging expectation of black males.) In 1970 the relationship had reversed, as a consequence of increased expectation among whites abetted by a gross decline in the expectation of blacks. The inter-sample significance level exceeded .001.

High socioeconomic status, whether derived from the occupation of the father -- as in this case -- or from the educational level of parents, consistently has been shown to be associated with high levels of student expectation (Rehberg and Westby, Sewell and Shah). Data from each of our samples support this relationship (Table 4), with the variation between students of high and low SES being quite acute. The 1970 expectation exceeded that of 1963. An analogy to the residence effect is found in that increase in expectation was greater for students of low SES. Inter-sample variation exceeded the .001 significance level.

Bayer brought to national attention the relationship between marriage intent and educational expectation. Our 1963 data likewise showed a strong relationship (Table 5), with earlier marriage intent exerting a depressing influence. Despite rather large increases in expectation among students with earlier marriage intents -- particularly those in the intermediate range -- in the 1970 sample, the inverse relationship between marriage intent and expectation remained intact. Inter-sample significance level exceeded .01.

Considerable evidence exists to show that migrants, typically in a rural-to-urban context, are in many ways advantaged over non-migrants (Blevins, Rieger) despite the contention that migration may result from other than economic reasons (Uhlenberg). The relationship between migration and expectation has been less rigorously pursued (Taves and Coller), but it seems logical to assume that students might recognize a pragmatic relationship between migration and worldly success, a condition which our society tends to associate with educational attainment. Our data indicate that those students who intended to migrate included substantially greater proportions with high education expectation than was true for those who had no migration plans (Table 6). The increases in expectation expressed by the 1970 sample were consistent with the general relationship; increases among migrants were quite large, and considerably greater than increases among non-migrants, particularly with regard to the minimal increase in non-migrant expectation. Inter-sample differences exceeded the .001 significance level.

Summary, Explanation, and Conclusions

The basic contention of time-related alteration in student education expectation is supported by these data, thereby lending corollary support to the derivative assertion of a need to develop time-series studies of youth expectations. Some 28 percent of the 1963 sample expressed high education expectation as opposed to 35 percent of the 1970 sample. The secondary contention -- of increased expectation by rural youth, leading to a decrease in difference between rural and urban resident expectation -- is partly supported. The ratio of difference in proportions of urban and rural residents with high educational expectation decreased slightly in 1970 vis-a-vis 1963, although the gross expectation of urban residents remained substantially greater than that of rural respondents.

Having determined that high school senior education expectation was considerably greater in 1970 than in 1963, and on the assumption that this is a description of reality rather than a methodological artifact, we find ourselves faced with the necessity of developing an explanation for the observation. Our discussion is cast in a general framework of potentially effective factors related to alterations in the social condition in North Carolina for the time period under consideration.

The population of the state has been augmented by a large number of inmigrants, many of whom originated in northern states, and the majority of whom are employed in the professions, in middle- or high-management positions, or as technicians. They brought with them a life style at variance with that of many North Carolinians, plus a high level of visibility. Concurrent with this event has been an increasing concentration in urban residency throughout the state, which has been inclusive of old-line residents.

(One characteristic of our sample tends to support the contentions of the above paragraph. In assessing the status of the father's occupation we frequently were frustrated by the diffuseness of the description and found it necessary to dispose of quite a number of responses or, alternatively, to assign the lowest possible ranking to a generalized job description -- such as "works in a mill." The consequence of the first activity probably was to upgrade the status of the sample since occupations of higher prestige

customarily would be more specifically described. The consequence of the second activity would be inject a conservative bias. The net effect should have been to achieve some degree of mutual cancellation which would result in a reasonably accurate description of the status base for each sample. To the extent that bias in measurement between samples occurred, it probably would be to accord slightly higher status to the 1970 sample. In fact, the proportion of students with high SES tripled from 1963 to 1970, from 10.3 percent to 29.7 percent, lending credence to our contention of a genuine increase in the occupational status structure of the state in the interval between measurement. The contentions of the following paragraph likewise appear to be borne out by this empirical fact.)

The industrial picture in the state also has changed, most noticeably in a proliferation of industry but equally effectively in an expansion of the kinds of employment available. There is an increased demand for individuals with professional, technical, or managerial abilities, an elaboration of the forms of employment dependent upon some amount of advanced or specialized education. Simultaneously, there has been an expansion of the service trades developed to cater to a larger population possessed of more exotic expectations than was true of the preceding population, basically adapted to an agriculture and mill life style. Technological innovations have not only added new employment opportunities but have also upgraded the necessary skills, the prestige, and the remuneration associated with more traditional forms of employment. A strong expansion in the building trades has had particular effect in upgrading the occupational status of individuals who previously would have found any employment impossible or difficult to obtain.

The educational picture has changed radically, as well. Perhaps the most obvious alteration is the development of an extensive junior college and technical school grid which has brought into higher education many persons who otherwise would have missed it entirely. The public schools have consolidated, added courses, become more sophisticated in outlook. Vocational courses, including but not limited to the traditional, have become available on a scale considered unattainable heretofore. Integration and consolidation have brought together students as well as value patterns which would have existed independently in the previously prevailing condition. Students from lower SES backgrounds and rural youth have been particularly affected by these changes.

Increasingly available and utilized transportation and communication networks have played their part as well. Interstate highways make access to much of the state relatively simple. Improved local roads, particularly in the mountain areas, have made egress possible for people who had been denied easy movement. Television has played its magic role. Even if the medium is not the message, the medium has made the message of increased economic opportunity and an altered life style available with an immediacy never before possible.

Each of these factors potentially would have a positive effect upon the expectation of youth. New and more attractive employment potentials, the opportunity to know of these, to have become aware of them at an earlier age, to have prepared for entry into them prior to the event, must raise levels of expectation. The example of persons living a different, but appealing, life style, the promise that that life style is not restricted but may be obtained by application and through utilization of available facilities, must raise levels of expectation.

It does not require any special ability to perceive the potential for increase in the levels of expectation inherent in the social changes to which North Carolina high school students have been exposed in recent years. What is required is rigorous research application to determine whether the

apparent effects of these social changes can be shown to be real. Here is an area to which the thrust of expectation research profitably may be directed.

A concluding work regarding Lipset's hypotheses: The rural-urban expectation difference remains, despite increases in expectation by rural youth. Evidence that the disparity is decreasing is ambiguous. Logically, one may prove a case that rural youth are as exposed to a variety of role models and occupational potentials as most non-rural youth; more so than inner-city youth. It is time to lay this ghost to rest. Lewis has provided seminal ideas relating to social-psychological factors, particularly the influence of local norms, as they may relate to expectation. Research should be undertaken to observe directly the relationship between exposure of rural youth and their expectation levels. It should be supplemented by similar research among urban youth, with particular attention to the potentially stultifying effects of inner-city residence. And the effects of potentially ameliorative variables such as educational framework and communication networks should be rigorously investigated. Such action will enable us to speak with more authority regarding the Lipset effect. It will also provide much-needed theory-based increments to the increasing body of empirically derived knowledge regarding the expectations of youths.

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Tables

Table 1. Comparisons, Percent of Respondents Indicating High Educational Expectation, By Sex

Year	Sex: Male	Sex: Female	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
1963	25.6 (488)*	29.5 (580)	1.98	NS
1970	40.5 (1267)	30.7 (1326)	27.16	.001
	Comparison by sex, 1963-1970, high educational expectation		16.44	.001
1973	36.6 (543)	38.3 (603)	0.34	NS

*In each case, the total number of respondents in the category

Table 2. Comparisons, Percent of Respondents Indicating High Educational Expectation, By Residence

Year	Residence: Country	Residence: Village	Residence: Town	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
1963	22.3 (672)	35.1 (171)	40.1 (207)	30.10	.001
1970	25.5 (1058)	41.4 (232)	42.5 (1303)	77.57	.001
	Comparison by residence, 1963-1970, high educational expectation			91.10	.001
1973	32.3 (350)	37.0 (173)	41.3 (603)	7.70	.05

Table 3. Comparisons, Percent of Respondents Indicating High Educational Expectation, By Race

Year	Race: White	Race: Black	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
1963	20.7 (619)	37.4 (449)	36.40	.001
1970	38.6 (1682)	29.7 (912)	20.33	.001
	Comparison by race, 1963-1970, high educational expectation		72.36	.001
1973	NO DATA			

Table 4. Comparisons, Percent of Respondents Indicating High Educational Expectation, by SES

Year	SES: High	SES: Low	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
1963	53.1 (98)	25.0 (851)	34.29	.001
1970	54.6 (674)	28.5 (1595)	140.07	.001
	Comparison by SES, 1963-1970, high educational expectation		53.25	.001
1973	45.9 (573)	29.1 (482)	31.49	.001

Table 5. Comparisons, Percent of Respondents Indicating High Educational Expectation, by Marriage Intent

Year	Marriage Intent: Early	Marriage Intent: Intermediate	Marriage Intent: Late	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
1963	11.3 (354)	30.7 (342)	43.8 (333)	91.09	.001
1970	16.6 (952)	47.9 (744)	52.4 (659)	181.86	.001
	Comparison by marriage intent, 1963-1970, high educational expectation			9.38	.01
1973	19.6 (301)	43.3 (393)	46.2 (357)	58.29	.001

Table 6. Comparisons, Percent of Respondents Indicating High Educational Expectation, by Migration Intent

Year	Migration Intent: Yes	Migration Intent: No	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
1963	31.9 (598)	22.7 (431)	10.50	.01
1970	48.7 (1649)	23.1 (998)	171.91	.001
	Comparison by migration intent, 1963-1970, high educational expectation		16.19	.001
1973	40.7 (622)	29.7 (418)	13.11	.001